

Sid Goes to Court

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Summary: This one's for Sid. P.S., if you've ever been mad at that vending machine that ate Arnold's quarter on the Thanksgiving he and Helga hung out together, here's its due.

Sid Goes to Court

It was a bad day for Sid. He woke up on a Saturday morning, happily anticipating his allowance. Then his father told him he wouldn't be getting any.

"I'm sorry, Sid!" said his father sitting across from him at breakfast. "But work just isn't giving me many hours at the moment. I know this is hard for you, son, but there just isn't enough money for an allowance for you at the moment. We need every penny to pay for the bills."

"Boy, howdy!" Sid lamented kicking the table leg with his boot and squenching up his hands into fists. His eyes furrowed beneath his hat and behind his nose. "This just isn't fair!"

"Life isn't fair to all of us," said his father, lamenting poverty. They already lived in a worn down apartment in a poorer part of the city. Now that he was making less money, it would be even harder to be the provider of the family. And Sid was not taking it well.

"Boy Howdy!" Sid yelled to himself stomping around in his boots when he had left the breakfast table. "I was supposed to meet the the guys! What am I going to do without any money? Wait a sec!" he cried then rushed up to his room.

"Ribbit," Sid's pet frog, Sidney, croaked in welcome as Sid re-entered his room. Sid flashed his pet a fond smile.

"Hello, Sidney," he said before crawling under his bed for a secret jar. Inside of it were his 'savings'.

"Five dollars!" Sid declared in a mixture of sorrow and relief. It wasn't much, but at least it was something. Maybe Stinky would lend him another couple of dollars.

Sid rushed out of his house, a smile returning to his lips. Now he just had to meet the guys by the movies. Stinky, Harold, Gerald, and Arnold would all be there. Sid began to run, but as he rushed by a stop sign a big, beefy, athletic arm reached out and lifted him higher than a nearby mailbox. It was Ludwig.

"Hey, you!" The bully said. "You owe me some money, remember!" Normally, it Wolfgang who bullied them. But he mostly bullied for sport. Torvalt, another bully, had largely stopped after Arnold had helped him get better grades in school. But Ludwig was another story. After leaving juvenile hall, he went right back to extorting people like Sid. Sid had been caught by the bully five times without any change in his pockets to steal. He had pleaded at the time to 'pay up' later. But now that he had five whole dollars in his pocket, Sid gulped. His robber grinned as Sid hesitantly brought the folded bill to light.

"I'll take that!" Ludwig said, dropping Sid hard onto the sidewalk. The bully laughed as he walked away. Sid was furious and near to tears.

"Oh, now what do I do?" Sid exclaimed. He snapped his fingers. "The bus stop!" He cried clicking his fingers.

Sid ran as fast as he could to the bus stop. People frequently dropped coins there as they dug for bus fare. Looking around, Sid gave an exclamation of joy. There was one, big shiny quarter in the cracks between the sidewalk.

There was still a tiny bit of time left, so Sid stopped to fish around in the bottom of the payphone before he went to the movie theaters. Someone had forgotten to take their change- another two whole quarters!"

"Wow!" Said Sid. "That's almost a dollar!" But he frowned. The other boys were waiting at the movie theater but he didn't have nearly enough.

"Hey, Arnold!" said Sid sidling up sheepishly behind him.

"Hey, Sid," was the golden-haired boy's reply as he waited at the end of a very long ticket line. "You excited about the movie? Invasion of the People Melts, Two. It's supposed to be good."

"Actually, you guys," Sid weaseled. "My parents have got this... I dunno, big shopping list for me, so I'm sorry, I won't be able to go with you guys. But I'll meet up with you at the docks!" There was an art installation there that the newspapers were all talking about. The boys had all planned to go see it, mostly to mock it- except Arnold. Sid suspected the boy actually wanted to see the novelty because it was 'art'.

"Oh," Arnold said mildly and unsuspecting. "Well, that's too bad! We'll catch up later with you, Sid!" He waved a fond farewell. Sid rounded the corner waving and wearing a fake smile. But then, when

Arnold could not see him, he look down at his boots.

"Aw, man! This stinks!" The boy complained to himself. Sid wandered down to the city's docks a bit early. Many of the girls from P.S. 118 were already there. The mayor was, too, sitting on a folding chair on a large grandstand with a musical band playing in front of her. At last the big moment arrived, and the boys from P.S. 118 showed up, having finished their movie.

"Thank you, thank!" said the major standing in front of a large sheet draped on something floating in the water. "I am proud, proud to say that we of Hillwood have a fond and refined appreciation of the arts!" Arnold smiled but some of the other boys coughed into their fist or rolled their eyes. Harold held his stomach and bent over pretending to be sick. Art was not his thing.

The girls of P.S. 118 were far more polite. Helga G. Pataki watched quietly chewing her gum. Phoebe Hyderdyle had a notebook for taking notes- probably for another school project. Rhonda stood waiting impatiently for the revealing with a loud sniff while Lila and Sheena waited with their hands folded to their hearts in eager anticipation. Eugene and Curly had shown up out of the blue, also, one wearing a grin and the other a frown. The mayor's speech went on.

"Now the moment you've all been waiting for!" She said finally. She pulled a cord that released the sheet and it slid off to reveal of twenty-foot tall, floating, platapus.

"You call that art?" Harold complained loudly at the back of the crowd. "That's a pool toy!"

"It could be considered art," Arnold voiced his opinion. "It is an original idea."

"Yeah, right," said Helga pointing down at her new pair of white shoes. "My sneakers are more art than that, and it's not called art. It's commerce."

"I suppose sometimes there is little difference," Arnold conceded the point at last. He really hadn't been impressed by the floating platapus that much.

"Pst. Hey, Harold," Stinky whispered to his friend with a wide grin. "What do you say we sneak down here after dark and try to ride it?" Harold grinned mischievously.

Sid might have chimed in with the desire to join them. Especially since Arnold was too busy talking to Helga to notice Stinky and Harold plotting. But Sid's heart was too heavy and his stomach was beginning to rumble. It was lunchtime.

"Ah, man, I could really go for some food right now," he mumbled out loud. Harold heard his complaint. His face took on a different expression frequent to him. Hunger.

"Now that you mention it," said Harold thinking slowly. "I'm starving! I know, there's a vending machine right here on the docks! Let's go!" Stinky and Harold began to run so Sid ran with them.

Stinky bought three whole Mr. Nutty bars. Sid fretted. He only had three quarters- just enough for one treat from the vending machine. He watched the other kids purchase their snacks first.

It was a tempermental machine. It was quite possibly possessed by a supernatural intelligence because when Harold loaded it with coins to buy eight bags of potato chips, it dropped eight low-fat granola bars instead. As if to annoy her, it took a full minute to release Rhonda's corn chip snack.

This time, Arnold was lucky. His bag of potato chips fell down without a hitch. But Helga, this time, was especially fortunate. The machine made a loud whirling crack and spun the metal spiral so many times that she wound up with just as many bags of chips as Harold had wanted.

"Heh-heh," said Helga gathering up the snacks the machine had mistakenly spat out. "Your turn, Phobes." She walked away while Phoebe put her quarters in to try to buy a package of sunflower seeds.

That did it. Sid was prepared to take his gamble that the tempermental old vending machine would be nice to him today. He fed in his quarters and listened to the quiet, metallic clinking sound of them moving to the coin box. He pressed a letter and number on the touch pad. Then he rubbed his hands together in eager anticipation.

The machine began to dispense with a soft whir. But then Sid's bag of pretzel mix hung up in the machine. Machine stared at the puffy bag, hung halfway upside-down so close to dropping. He put his hands over his head and yelled.

"No!" Sid hollered shaking the machine back and forth to try to dislodge the chip bag. Those were his last coins! When shaking failed to dislodge the snack, he kicked the machine with ill temper. "Give me back my money, you miserable piece of crud!" Sid gave the machine one loud kick, then began to shake it again.

"Uh, Sid?" said Arnold pausing his next potato chip between his lips. "That isn't such a good idea!" In the next moment, Sid's violent shaking of the machine toppled it over. The wicked vending machine fell to the ground with a mighty crash and a violent fountain of blue sparks fizzled and popped momentarily. Surely, the cloud of smoke meant that the machine had dispensed for the last time.

"OOOHHH!" came the hushed whisper of the crowd. The mayor and at least fifty other people all stared at Sid, aghast.

Needless to say, the mayor of Hillwood wasn't very happy with Sid. Two weeks later, Sid was scheduled to go into court to be punished for his crimes. Breaking the vending machine hadn't been enough to get him in jail. But it did make it pretty certain he wouldn't be seeing an allowance for the rest of his life.

"Ah, man!" Sid wailed to himself as he stood outside the court steps. "Why do these things always happen to me?!" He put his face in his hands and sniffled dramatically.

"Just go in there and tell them you're sorry," said Arnold. He, too,

had been summoned to court for another reason. He had been standing nearest to Sid when the 'incident' had happened. He was wearing his black suit and a blue bow-tie for the day at court.

"Arnold!" said Sid springing at him and grasping at Arnold's shoulders in a desperate plea. "Don't rat me out! Tell them I didn't do anything!" But Arnold swept Sid off his shoulder. Arnold balled his hands on either side of his waist, perturbed.

"Sid, saying that wouldn't accomplish anything. It would only make me look bad. About fifty people saw what you did. Including the mayor." Sid curled his newly horrified fingers towards his face. As excitable as always, a few tears rolled down his face.

"But Arnold!"

"No buts, Sid," Arnold said with firm declaration. "Do your best and apologize. If you do, who knows? Maybe the judge will be more lenient." Arnold pushed his hand against one of the courthouse doors to swing it open. Sid got to his feet and followed.

Sid sat, paralyzed through the whole proceedings. He mumbled and stumbled through every question. He begged and pleaded and cried.

Worse, someone had decided to take Sid's Beadle boots and put them on a stand as 'evidence'. Sid had left muddy boot prints on the vending machine and his boots had been a weapon of sorts during his act of vandalism. Sid had to sit through court wearing only his socks. When it was Arnold's turn to speak on the witness stand, he tried extra hard to be polite for Sid's sake.

"So you see, your honor," said Arnold wrapping it all up with an uplifted hand and his eyes rolled back in thought as he chose his words carefully. "Sid's a good kid, and if you just give him a chance, I'm sure he'll learn from his mistakes. He was just having a bad day, is all."

"Hm," said the judge studying Arnold with a critical eye. He turned back to Sid who was wearing an unconvincing, nervous grin.

"Alright. I'm assigning you forty-five hours of community service. Case dismissed." Arnold smiled. Surely, Sid could live through that! But the boy was miserable.

"Boy, howdy," complained Sid as they walked away from the courthouse. "This stinks!"

"It could have been a lot worse, Sid," Arnold disagreed. "But the real problem is why you felt you had to kick a vending machine in the first place." Sid began to bawl again and Arnold opened up his eyes wide.

"I couldn't help it, Arnold!" said Sid collapsing to the ground and hugging Arnold's ankles. "I'm...poor! I don't have money to go to the movies or the arcade or any of those cool things."

"Well," said Arnold, thinking. "Maybe you just need to find something to do. A hobby that doesn't cost a lot of money."

"Well, that doesn't sound too bad," Sid replied. He stood up as Arnold smiled encouragingly at him.

So they went over to Arnold's room. Sid tried hobbies. First, he tried writing. Arnold journaled quietly in his 'Secret Notebook' while Sid scribbled on some notebook paper. With a weak smile, he offered his work to Arnold to read. But from the look on Arnold's face he could tell the blond-haired boy wasn't impressed. At all.

"Maybe you should try drawing," Arnold said handing Sid some colored pencils. After a few minutes Sid held up a page of stick figures.

"Uh, how about stamp collecting?" suggested Arnold. They went through all the opened mail in the house and tore any unique looking stamps off the envelopes, then pasted them on a page. But Sid kept getting the glue everywhere and some of the stamps ended up on him instead of the page.

"Aurgh!" Sid said wiping stamps and glue off his face onto his hands and shaking them. "This isn't working out!"

"Maybe you could try reading fanfics," Arnold threw out as a last thought.

"What's a fanfic?" Sid asked with poker-faced ignorance.

"..."

"You know, I don't know what one is either," said Arnold turning back to his computer desk.

"That's it, Arnold," said Sid with a wide sweep of his hands. "I give up! There just isn't a hobby for a guy like me. I'm bad at everything! Except frog-catching."

"Don't be discouraged, Sid!" Arnold voiced turning round in his chair again. "There must be some sort of hobby that suits you. Just find something you like to do and keep practicing. Eventually you'll get good at it."

"Yeah, right!" Said Sid stomping out of the room. "See ya, Arnold."

Sid went home, feeling depressed, gloomy, and out right down on himself. He stayed that way for the next couple of weeks. But then a stroke of good fortune came Sid's way at last. A student boy band stayed after school in the Cocohut to give a concert. Sid attended since it was free. The Cocohut was Mr. Simmon's after school lounge for students, and all the entertainment there was done by students. But the concert was late in starting. The band couldn't get the colored lights they had plugged in to light the stage like they wanted. Somehow, Sid felt inexplicably drawn to the scene.

"Hey, guys!" he said popping up behind the boy band trio. "Do you need help?" Without another word, Sid fixed all the lights, then went to the stereo to adjust the buttons to a better setting, muttering techno-babble all the while. "And you really want the bass to rumble at the proper decibel so that the lowest guitar notes can be heard

clearly," the boy mumbled with great excitement as the boy band members stared at him.

"Wow, man!" said a sandy-haired, buck-toothed boy with too much hair covering his face. He grasped Sid's hand and shook it heartily. "You are, like, a genius with stage equipment. You could be, like a stage manager or something."

"Could I?" Sid repeated, taken aback. It was a shocking thought that he had found something he was good at, after all.

Three weeks later, Sid strolled down Vine Street with Arnold again. The two boys were going over the Arnold's house to work on an amateur video game the two were programming together. The creative part came from Arnold, while Sid did most of the boring stuff like typing code. Sid lifted his hands high above his head and was in high spirits.

"You won't believe it, Arnold!" Sid said, swooning over himself. "My parents and I are talking about me going to school for graphic arts design. I could, you know, be a special effects artist or something and make really cool stuff for movies or something. Maybe someday I might even get to work for my favorite television show, Yo Arnest!"

"That's really, great Sid," said Arnold declining to mention that the show would probably stop running by the time Sid grew up. But he gave his friend a hearty slap on the back to show his overall support.

"See, I told you so," Arnold continued. "You are good at something. You're the greatest special effects artist the Cocohut has ever seen!"

"And the champion frog catcher of P.S. 118!" Sid declared with pride. He removed his hat and took his pet frog Sidney from out under it to give her a kiss.

"Right," said Arnold smiling, even though his friend was a boy who kissed frogs. The end.

End
file.